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Improving the United States' Efforts in Countering Violent Extremist
Organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa.

By
Stephen L. Cunningham
U.S. Department of State

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Improving the United States' Efforts in Countering Violent Extremist
Organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa

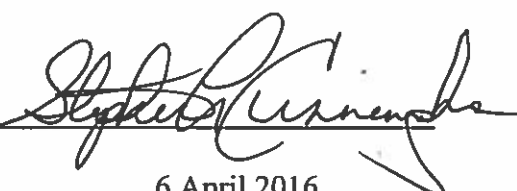
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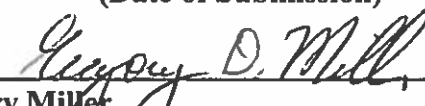
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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

This paper is entirely my own work except as documented in footnotes.

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ABSTRACT

The United States and its international partners have strengthened Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in many areas referenced in the 2012 U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). But, despite time and money invested, and increasing fiscal austerity, security in the region continues to be unpredictable, complex, and likely dangerous. To meet the President's policy goals for regional security, the United States must combine resources across echelons, geographical boundaries, and organizational affiliations to address the growing influence of violent extremist organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa. The goal of this thesis is to identify opportunities where improvements can be made in building and maintaining success even as governmental budgets get tighter. This thesis examines four prevalent groups; the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), Boko Haram, Al Shabab, and Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Recent attacks carried out by violent extremist organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa are also compared to the goals laid out in strategic messaging offered by the United States and used to determine if interagency efforts are meeting the President's intent. The thesis finds that one of the primary obstacles to achieving US strategic goals in Sub-Saharan Africa is the limited cooperation between the government agencies as they work to combat violent extremist organizations. The thesis offers a recommendation for building cooperation between the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Military and other agencies in combating Violent Extremist Organizations (VEO) and promoting security in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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DEDICATION

To my wife and children, whose endless support and sacrifice throughout this academic year has been immeasurable. And to my SEM2 colleagues and Joint Forces Staff College advisors for their patience and support this year.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In the 2012 U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), President Obama laid out his vision for the region using his, “Four Pillars of U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa.”¹ The mainstays of the policy are Pillar I: Strengthen Democratic Institutions, Pillar II: Spur Economic Growth, Trade and Investment, Pillar III: Advance Peace and Security, and Pillar IV: Promote Opportunity and Development.² The President reinforces these goals through the release of other documents; The 2015 National Security Strategy,³ and the 2011 National Strategy for Countering Terrorism.⁴

Across the spectrum of the President’s concerns, the United States, the European Union (EU), and other international partners promote economic growth, increase social development, and expanding the search for natural resources. Despite the time and money invested by the international community in these areas and directly training and equipping African authorities to combat Violent Extremist Organizations, security in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) remains unpredictable, complex, and potentially dangerous. These security realities stand in stark contrast to the President’s policy goals. Meeting the President’s challenge will require the United States and other stakeholders to combine resources across echelons, work across geographical boundaries, and reach beyond

¹ U.S. President. Policy, “U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa”: Washington, D.C.: White House, (June 2012): 2 – 6.

² Ibid.

³ U.S. President. National Security Strategy. Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, February 2015.

⁴ U.S. President. National Strategy For Counterterrorism. Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, June 2011.

organizational affiliations to address the growing problem of violent extremist organizations Sub-Saharan Africa.

To strengthen security in Sub-Saharan Africa as the President's third goal states, all branches of the government will have to work together. The approach necessitates a holistic, interagency effort led by a single entity able to unite the various organizations as well as the non-governmental and other regional partners diplomatically. Ultimately, progress will depend on the collective efforts of these organizations to strengthen democracies, build strong economies, and promote development in governance and societies.

Despite large amounts of money and human resources used to promote security and strengthen security reforms in Sub-Saharan Africa, there is little evidence to suggest that sustainable successes have been made in fighting VEOs. This thesis analyzes U.S. Government efforts to assist African states combating violent extremist organizations (VEO). It tries to determine if the strategy is disrupting these organizations' abilities to create instability in the region. A comparative analysis of recent attacks carried out by Al-Qa'ida affiliates and other violent extremist organizations are included. The thesis then conducts an assessment of the United States' interagency efforts to meet the intent of the strategic goals presented in the President's policy.

Thus, the goal is to ascertain whether the actions the government is taking to bring security to sub-Saharan Africa is working. In the end, this thesis presents an alternate approach of strengthening cooperation between the U.S. Department of State and other governmental agencies to include the U.S. Military in combating Violent

Extremist Organizations (VEOs) and promoting security in Sub-Saharan Africa as outlined in the President's policy.

CHAPTER 2

Policy Background/Strategic Framework

The Executive Branch creates United States' National Strategic documents to communicate the President's vision for the nation's future to Congress, the public and international audiences. The highest ranking of these documents is the National Security Strategy (NSS), which outlines the major national security concerns of the United States and how the administration plans to address them using the instruments of national power. The National Security Strategy provides general guidance of what the President wants accomplished and more specific guidance is defined in subordinate documents.¹

In the 2015 National Security Strategy (NSS), President Obama advocates for a whole of government approach to solving many of the nation's domestic and international issues, including social development and security in Africa. He acknowledges the road will be long and one the United States cannot go alone and the plan must be implemented with international institutions, international financial institutions and key regional organizations, led by the United States.²

The President's NSS also advocates for shared international responsibility, especially through diplomacy.³ The President states that terrorist threats have "gained traction in areas of instability, limited opportunity, and broken governance."⁴ The areas of the world experiencing VEO activity "range from South Asia through the Middle East

¹ Santacroce, Michael A. Joint/Interagency SMARTBOOK. Lakeland, Florida: The Lightning Press, (2014): 1-8.

² U.S. President. National Security Strategy. Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, (February 2015), 9.

³ Ibid, 3.

⁴ Ibid, 9.

and into Africa,” are especially vulnerable to the growth of VEOs.⁵ He adds the United States learned many lessons combating VEOs since September 2001.⁶ One lesson the President highlights is that the U.S. will shift away from fighting terrorism through costly, large scale wars and pursue a more sustainable approach that targets counterterrorism efforts against VEOs, and brings in collective action with responsible partners.⁷ Together with these partners, the President explains, the United States will work to address the underlying conditions that foster violent extremism such as poverty, inequality, and repression.⁸ He adds the U.S. will support alternatives to extremist messaging and promote economic opportunities for women and disaffected youths as measures to prevent the expansion of terrorism.⁹

The President argues that through its ability to lead, the United States is poised to strengthen global values, advance liberty, and advance the rule of law across the globe.¹⁰ In Sub-Saharan Africa, he says the U.S. can improve security by strengthening the operational capacity of the African Union (AU), other regional organizations, and broaden the ranks of capable troop-contributing countries to the African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership.¹¹ The President says this coalition and regional ready forces will help African countries rapidly deploy to emerging crises.¹² The President contends that in order to achieve this we must promote good governance, support civil society organizations, and empower individuals to pursue peaceful ways to advance their

⁵ U.S. President, 9.

⁶ Ibid, 9.

⁷ Ibid, 9.

⁸ Ibid, 9.

⁹ Ibid, 9.

¹⁰ Ibid, 9.

¹¹ Ibid, 9.

¹² Ibid, 9.

interests and express their beliefs and ideas.¹³ A free and successful society creates stability and helps to counter violent extremism.

The same society must also respect the same rule of law it tries to spread. When addressing the VEO concerns specifically about Africa, the President says, “too many governments are responding to the expansion of civil society and free press by passing laws and adopting policies that erode that progress.”¹⁴ And the means governments use to fight violent extremist organizations cannot, “pose threats to innocent civilians, regional stability, and [U.S.] national security,” without undermining the goal of improved rule of law.¹⁵

The President’s plan for Africa advocates for the U.S. to deepen security partnerships with African countries and institutions, exemplified by the U.S. partnerships with the U.N. and AU in Mali and Somalia.¹⁶ Such cooperative efforts, he claims, help resolve conflicts, strengthen African peacekeeping capacity, and counter transnational security threats while respecting human rights and the rule of law.¹⁷

The President’s strong messaging for building governance in Africa and combating terrorism does not end in the National Security Strategy. It continues in the National Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa, the Department of Defense’s Quadrennial Defense Review and the National Strategy for Counterterrorism (NSCT).

¹³ U.S. President. National Security Strategy. Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, (February 2015), 21.

¹⁴ Ibid, 21.

¹⁵ Ibid, 26 – 27.

¹⁶ Ibid, 26 – 27.

¹⁷ Ibid 26 – 27.

On page 14 of the NSCT while discussing al-Shabab, the President expands his messaging of building partner nation's capacity, to include developing their efforts from the national to the local level.¹⁸ By doing so the U.S. can countervail the forces of persistent instability and disorder, such as Al-Qa'ida and its affiliates.¹⁹ Al-Qa'ida affiliates, like al-Shabab and AQIM, continue to conduct attacks and demonstrate an intent to conduct attacks against Western interests, and remain the focus of United States counterterrorism (CT) operations.²⁰

The National Strategy for Counterterrorism (NSCT) emphasizes that timing, in terms of rapidity and coordination, across government agencies, that supply the appropriate tools, is crucial for success.²¹ It also details the United States' Counterterrorism (CT) efforts against some of the most recognized VEOs in Africa. In combating AQIM for example, the NSCT says traditional counterterrorism efforts will not eradicate the organization from its base in the Maghreb and Sahel.²² And that the effort will require long-term capacity building initiatives in Algeria and the Sahelian countries of Mauritania, Mali, and Niger, and other regional states.²³ The President adds this comment.²⁴ "U.S. citizens and interests in the region are threatened by AQIM today, and we must therefore pursue near-term efforts and at times more targeted approach that directly counter AQIM and its enabling elements. We must work actively to contain,

¹⁸ U.S. President. National Strategy For Counterterrorism. Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, (June 2011) 7.

¹⁹ Ibid, 7.

²⁰ Ibid, 7.

²¹ Ibid, 7.

²² Ibid, 7.

²³ Ibid, 7.

²⁴ Ibid, 7.

disrupt, degrade, and dismantle AQIM as logical steps on the path to defeating the group.”²⁵

²⁵ U.S. President. National Strategy For Counterterrorism. Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, (June 2011) 16.

CHAPTER 3

Evaluation Criteria and Methodology

Numerous violent extremist organizations operate in the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) region. This thesis examines four of the more prevalent groups; the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), Boko Haram, Al Shabab, and Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). All four groups are included in the Department of State's list of international terror organizations. The analysis evaluates each organization's history, motivation, the number of terrorist attacks, and the scale of the events in terms of casualties. It also examines the United States' Government agencies providing counterterrorism training and assistance to the nation states in the SSA region. It compares published United States' strategic policies and information about recent terrorist activity in Sub-Saharan Africa to determine their effectiveness in combating violent extremist organizations. The goal of the research is to put forth alternative ways of addressing violent extremist organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa.

This research uses the case study method because of its ability to provide substantive recommendations when the data collected comes from a variety of sources – documents, interviews, and observations. The flexibility of the case study approach makes it ideal for investigating contemporary events and topics like violent extremist organization activities in Sub-Saharan Africa.¹

In essence, the case study method is well suited to evaluate complex social phenomena, interventions and the real-world context in which they occurred, and is used

¹ Yin, Robert, Case Study Research: Design and Methods. (California: Sage Publications, Inc, 2014.) 11 – 12.

to demonstrate a situation in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes.

A challenge in conducting this research has been keeping up with both the security status in Sub-Saharan Africa and the United States' response to incidents. Illustrative of this point are the events that occurred during this research that include: Boko Haram being recognized as the deadliest terrorist group on November 18, 2015; Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb's (AQIM) attack in Bamako, Mali, on November 20, 2015,² which killed twenty; and the attack against Westerners in Grand Bassam, Cote D'Ivoire on March 13, 2016.³ Contrasting these events is a successful Joint U.S. military and African Union force's operation in the Central African Republic to capture the leadership of the Lord's Resistance Army.⁴ The fluidness of the region's security situation cannot be over emphasized.

Another challenge was the presentation of the information about different components in a way that makes sense to the reader. For example, the focus of the thesis is about fostering better relationships between U.S. governmental agencies, international organizations, and regional partners to build better security for the region. One source provides a certain perspective of the violent extremist organization in question, and

²Kodji Siby & Kevin Sieff, "At least 20 hostages dead in siege of hotel in Mali, official says", *The Washington Post*, (November 20, 2015) https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/gunmen-storm-luxury-hotel-in-mali-in-hostage-standoff/2015/11/20/8c2cefd4-b86f-4d86-892d-4d7b3c2a0811_story.html (accessed January 8, 2015).

³ Michael Miller, "Horror at the beach: 22 dead in terrorist attack on Ivory Coast resorts", *The Washington Post*, (March 24, 2016), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/03/14/horror-at-the-beach-22-dead-in-terrorist-attack-on-ivory-coast-resorts/>, (accessed March 19, 2016).

⁴ Rajiv Chandrasekaran, Kony 2013: "U.S. quietly intensifies effort to help African troops capture infamous warlord", *The Washington Post*, (October 28, 2013), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/kony-2013-us-quietly-intensifies-effort-to-help-african-troops-capture-infamous-warlord/2013/10/28/74db9720-3cb3-11e3-b6a9-da62c264f40e_story.html (accessed November 18th 2015).

another source, or agency, represents a different perspective that becomes difficult to reconcile. Attributing the difference can rely on several explanations: that the reporting organizations spin the data to provide an advantageous view, that the VEO's move between countries and the data is inaccurate because of the compiler's perspective, or that VEOs become more violent just before they cease to exist, or that US presence exacerbates the VEOs struggle because it increases the nation's capacity to combat VEOs. This thesis attempts to provide an objective, unbiased analysis that avoids the first two explanations by representing all data from all perspectives and counting events individually.

The three prevalent violent extremist groups in Sub-Saharan Africa are; Boko Haram, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and Al Shabab. Although originating in North Africa with ties to core Al Qa'eda and Al Qa'eda on the Arab Peninsula, VEO Al Qa'eda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is included in this thesis. The attacks in Bamako, Mali and Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso and Grand Bassam, Cote D'Ivoire between October 2015 and March 2016 warrants its inclusion. Figure 1, illustrates the cross border regions where these four groups operate in Africa. Figures 2, illustrates the numbers of attacks carried out by each group annually since 2004. Figure 3 shows the number of attacks carried out by each per year during the same time frame.



Figure 1: Key Terrorist Groups in Africa - Source: American Broadcasting Corp. 2014⁵

⁵ Ma'ayan Rosenzweig, "Kidnapped Nigerian Girls: Key Terrorist Groups in Africa", American Broadcasting Corp. 2014, URL (accessed September 30th 2015).

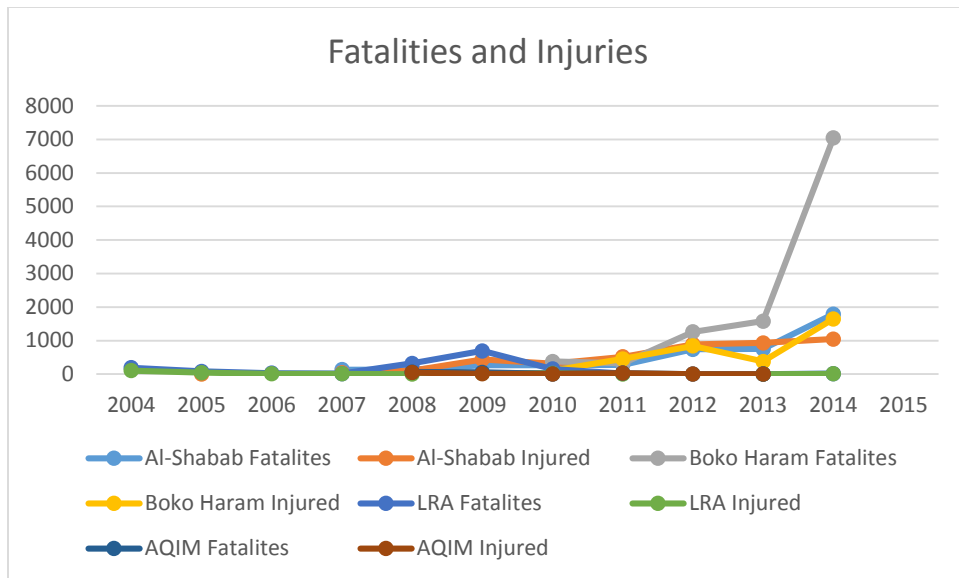


Figure 2: Fatalities and Injuries by Group per year⁶

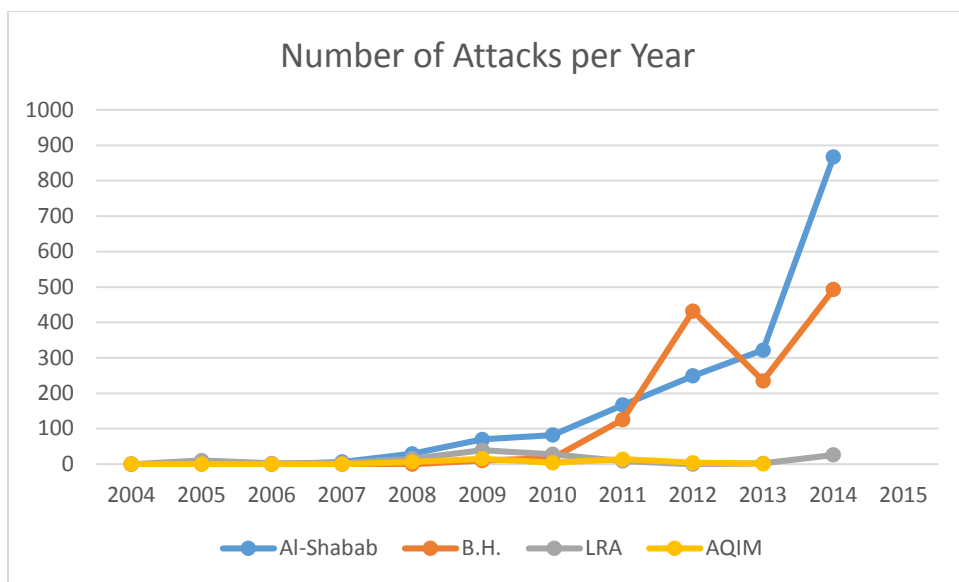


Figure 3: Number of Attacks per year⁷

The data was collected in January 2015 from the Global Terrorism Database

hosted by the University of Maryland. The raw information was not condensed, was not

⁶ Data adapted from the Global Terrorist Database – University of Maryland 2015. A comparison with data from the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC) validated these statistics.

⁷ Ibid.

in a form ready to be inserted into a spreadsheet and needed compiling by group and year. The process of filtering the data included comparing statistics from different sources while looking at all four groups. I looked at every event individually by year and summed the totals by hand, to show the numbers of events, casualties and injuries. Once the totals were combined, they were checked against the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC) and found to be similar with minimal discrepancy and therefore close enough to illustrate basic validity. The information is displayed above in a graphical form. The graphs are meant to provide the reader with an appreciation of the amount of violence in the region despite support from the United States Government and its partners to bring it under control. It also illustrates the contrast to United States' strategic policy as discussed in chapter two.

This paper begins its analysis in June 2012 because that is when the United States released its Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa. However, analysis begins with the bombing of the United Nations (UN) compound in Abuja, Nigeria on August 26th 2011, by Boko Haram. The attack on the UN is significant because it was the first time the VEO carried out an attack against a Western target. The attack killed 23 and left 81 wounded.⁸ The data shows that since the 2012 adoption of the Sub-Saharan Strategy, the continent has seen an increase in the number of terrorist attacks and an increase in the severity of these incidents as illustrated in figures 2 and 3.

⁸ Global Terrorism Database, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and the Response to Terrorism. <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=201108260013>. (Accessed September 20, 2015).

CHAPTER 4

Whole of Government Approach

This thesis research discovered the United States has taken a proactive approach in trying to meet Present Obama's security goals in Sub-Saharan Africa. These efforts represent the government's work from the Strategic level all the way down to the tactical.

At the Strategic level is the Department of State's Bureau of Counterterrorism. The Bureau of Counterterrorism (CT) was formed in 1972 following the terrorist attacks at the Munich Olympics Games. Its mission is to establish strategic policy, forge partnerships with non-state actors, multilateral organizations, and foreign governments for the purpose of advancing counterterrorism objectives. Working with other government agencies, the Bureau of Counterterrorism takes a leading role in developing the coordinated strategies to defeat VEOs abroad and in securing international cooperation for the effort. The bureau's modest staff also advises the Secretary of State on Counterterrorism policy matters.¹

Working alongside the Bureau of Counterterrorism at the Department of State is the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS). The Bureau of Diplomatic Security is the law enforcement and security arm of the Department of State. It is a leader in international investigations, counterterrorism, threat analysis, cyber and technical security, and dignitary protection. From offices within the United States and across the globe DS ensures America can conduct diplomacy safely and securely at 275 missions.^{2 3}

¹ United States Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism webpage: <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/> (accessed January 8, 2016).

² United States Department of State, Bureau of Diplomatic Security webpage: <http://www.state.gov/m/ds/> (accessed January 8, 2016).

³³ Mission in this context means the United States' Mission being the American embassy or consulate.

As part of its broad counterterrorism mission Diplomatic Security produces an annual review of significant incidents of violence toward Americans entitled Political Violence Against Americans. The report, produced by the Office of Intelligence and Threat Analysis, provides a comprehensive picture of the violence against American citizens and their interests on an annual basis.⁴

Another valuable program managed by Diplomatic Security is the Rewards for Justice Program. Under this program, the Secretary of State can offer rewards for information that leads to the arrest or conviction of terrorists, or those planning terrorist attacks against Americans. The program has been successful in rewarding over 80 individuals who provided information that put terrorists behind bars. Today the Rewards for Justice Program plays a vital role in the Afghanistan Transition Plan.⁵

Another important tool for countering violent extremists is the Diplomatic Security's Antiterrorism Assistance Program (ATA). The Antiterrorism Assistance Program equips and trains civilian security and law enforcement personnel in tactics and procedures to deal with terrorism. Diplomatic Security officers evaluate the needs of the host country and, with the assistance of the US mission, develop a tailored training curriculum. Courses ATA provides to host nation law enforcement officers includes: bomb detection, crime scene investigations, airport and building security, maritime protection, and protection of dignitaries. Most of these courses are conducted in the developing world, which lacks the resources needed to maintain an effective antiterrorism program. Since its creation in 1984 ATA has trained over 84,000 foreign law

⁴United States Department of State, Bureau of Diplomatic Security webpage: Fighting Terrorism. <http://www.state.gov/m/ds/terrorism/index.htm> (accessed January 8, 2016).

⁵ United States Department of State, Bureau of Diplomatic Security webpage: Rewards for Justice Program <http://www.state.gov/m/ds/terrorism/c8651.htm> (accessed January 8, 2016).

enforcement and security officers from 154 nations.⁶ It is designed to support the United States' counterterrorism objectives by building the capacity of our nation's partners. The resident Regional Security Office is Diplomatic Security's facilitator for these programs and other locally run training courses to also help build partner capacity.

The United States Department of Defense manages several programs to help build the military and security capacity of the United States' partners. Security Force Assistance and the Foreign Internal Defense program⁷ are two such programs. Security Forces assistance programs are Department of Defense activities designed to build common military and security approaches. These engagements are often referred to as organize, train, equip, rebuild/build, and advise activities.⁸

These agencies also collaborate in other common interests like, counterintelligence, and security. Every day there are hundreds of interagency working group meetings taking place across the country and the globe. No truer is this than in the missions of the Department of State. These working groups vary from the Country Team, where offices share their programs and activities among each other, to the Emergency Action Committee, which assesses threats to the mission and how to respond. Working groups are part of the embassy structure. However, there is not a required working group for coordinating counterterrorism or antiterrorism efforts in country.

As of July 2015, however, the U.S embassy in Niamey, Niger was convening Counterterrorism Working Group meetings to coordinate U.S. government efforts and

⁶ United States Department of State, Bureau of Diplomatic Security webpage: Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program <http://www.state.gov/m/ds/terrorism/c8583.htm> (accessed January 8, 2016).

⁷ The ⁷Department of State is the lead agency in the Foreign Internal Defense Program, and the Department of Defense conducts the engagements.

⁸ Col Matthew R. Moore, "Bigger is not always better – The United States Support to Security Forces Assistance," Joint Forces Staff College, Master's Thesis (13 April 2015), 4.

share information about each agency's counterterrorism efforts. The concept brings together the offices within the mission dealing with countering VEOs in the host country. The Regional Security Officer in Niamey, at the time, said that the reason the embassy's counterterrorism efforts ran so smoothly was because of the working relationships forged by their Counterterrorism working group.

CHAPTER 5

The Lord's Resistance Army

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) originated from the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces, which was the armed wing of Holy Spirit Movement. The group was founded in August 1986 by Alice Auma who claimed to be under the orders of a Christian spirit by the name of Lakwena.¹ She is often referred to as Alice Lakwena for this reason. Alice Lakwena waged a war against the National Resistance Army (NRA) of the government, to respond to socioeconomic marginalization and to spiritually cleanse the Acholi people from past sins.

After achieving early success, the movement grew to 10,000 followers at the height of power.² She persuaded her soldiers to smear nut oil on their bodies in the shape of crosses and to drink magic potions before going into battle, as a way to protect them from bullets. She also blessed stones so they would explode like grenades when thrown against the enemy. Alice Lakwena and her movement came within 50 miles of the Ugandan capital, close to overthrowing the central government. The Holy Spirit mobile force was eventually defeated by the National Resistance Army and Alice Lakwena fled to Kenya where she died in a refugee camp in 2007.³

¹ Behrend, Heike, *Alice Lakwena & Holy Spirits: War In Northern Uganda 1986-97* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2000).

² Green, Matthew, *The Wizard of the Nile: The Hunt For Africa's Most Wanted*. (Massachusetts: Portobello Books, 2009), 4.

³ Behrend, Heike, *Alice Lakwena & Holy Spirits: War In Northern Uganda 1986-97* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2000).

Alice Lakwena and her Holy Spirit Mobile Forces were succeeded in 1987 by Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army. Like Lakwena, Kony is from an Acholi village and proclaims to be a spokesperson of God and a spirit medium. His childhood friend and former secretary Lakoch p'Oyoo claims Kony is visited by multiple spirits.⁴ Matthew Green describes a 2006 meeting with Father Carlos Rodriguez, a man who met Joseph Kony on five occasions. Father Carlos describes the LRA leader, "For me, the man is a psychopath. He may be laughing with you and very cordial, saying that he really wants peace, but the next minute he's very angry and shouting and making threats and saying he's going to give orders to kill everybody."⁵ Though this comment is a subjective opinion of the individual who leads the LRA, it provides a glimpse of the mental state of the person running the organization. The group may be carrying out violence for violence sake.

Green describes meeting several people in his attempt to learn more about Joseph Kony and perhaps meet the leader himself. Several of those Green spoke with tell him stories about their encounters with the rebel leader and describe how other people have asked Kony to leave the bush and the violence behind. One such person is his mother. Yet, all of the encounters have a similar ending. The story tellers report what Kony tells them, that the spirits chose him to be the messenger of God and not the other way round. So because he was chosen, he must listen to what the spirits tell him. In simple terms, he will not leave the bush or turn away from the fight.

The National Counterterrorism Center states:

⁴ Green, Matthew, *The Wizard of the Nile: The Hunt For Africa's Most Wanted*. (Massachusetts: Portobello Books, 2009), 40.

⁵ *Ibid*, 17.

Joseph Kony established the LRA with the claim of restoring the honor of his ethnic Acholi people and to instill a government based on his personal version of the Ten Commandments. However, under Kony's leadership, LRA soldiers conduct violence for the sake of violence, primarily against civilians, rather than fighting to advance a political agenda. Since 2005, the LRA is believed to have committed hundreds of attacks resulting in well over 5,000 deaths and considerably more wounded and kidnapped.⁶

All of this is to point out the capacity for violence and destruction that Kony and the LRA represent.

In 2008, the military forces of Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan launched a joint military offensive against the LRA in northeastern Congo called "Operation Lightning Thunder." The operation cut off supplies and destroyed some of the organization's main camps. It failed to capture or kill the leaders of the Lord's Resistance Army, but broke the LRA into smaller, more mobile groups and spread them out in the border region, making them even more difficult to locate. The State Department estimates current LRA force levels to be between 150 to 200 fighters that move about in groups of 5 – 8 fighters.⁷

In May 2010, the U.S. Congress passed the "Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act."⁸ The following October, the United States deployed 100 American soldiers to Kampala to serve as advisors and trainers to the local and regional militaries aimed at removing Kony from power. In March of 2014, the United States announced it would send additional military assets, including personnel and

⁶ National Counterterrorism Center, Counter Terrorism Guide, Terrorist Groups, Lord's Resistance Army: National Counterterrorism Center. www.nctc.gov/site/groups/lra.html (accessed January 4th, 2016).

⁷ United States' Department of State, Office of the Spoke person, Factsheet – Lord's Resistance Army: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/03/186734.htm> (accessed January 4th, 2016).

⁸ National Counterterrorism Center, Counter Terrorism Guide, Terrorist Groups, Lord's Resistance Army: National Counterterrorism Center. www.nctc.gov/site/groups/lra.html (accessed January 4th, 2016).

aircraft, to support to the hunt for Kony.⁹ In September 2013 U.S. military advisors accompanied a coalition of soldiers from the Central African Republic, South Sudan, and Uganda on an operation designed to capture the rebel leader.¹⁰ Though the team succeeded in finding the objective, it failed to capture anyone in the group. It may be discouraging to the team and the leaders of the nations involved, however it marks a significant improvement in the capabilities of these militaries to work together. This seems to be the new push for the effort; while the end state is to capture or kill the leader of the LRA, it is the US' aim for the partners to take the lead and build confidence in their counterterrorism efforts. The US will partner with them, train their forces and provide intelligence in achieving the collective ends of defeating the LRA.

Similar Case Study

A “cutting off the head” policy similar to those used against Sri Lanka’s Tamil Tigers and UNITAS will likely bring an end to the Lord’s Resistance Army. Because the leader of the LRA, Joseph Kony has been the head of the organization and arguably the center of gravity for years. The organization follows the word of God, which comes from spirits the leader channels and then translates for the group; removing Kony from the field, the organization will likely collapse. In other faith-based organizations, the word of God is often translated from a book which the followers can read for themselves. In the latter, it is easier for someone else to fill-in behind the leader when a leadership change occurs. A second unique trait of the LRA is that it conscripted many of its members

⁹ U.S. President. Letter from the President, IDLs War Powers Resolution. Washington, D.C. (March 24th. 2015 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/25/letter-president-idls-war-powers-resolution> (accessed January 6th, 2016).

¹⁰ Stars and Stripes, “U.S. Special Ops Activists Working Together Against the LRA”, <http://www.stripes.com/news/us-special-ops-activists-working-together-against-lra-1.210040> (accessed 20 September 2015).

from their families as child soldiers vice a volunteer membership seen in many other VEOs. This may play a role in the way such violent organizations end. Additionally, the LRA and UNITAS share a similar geographic location and fight; to counter the government and to support local ethnic people.

Recommendations/Summary

The United States must continue to pursue a “cutting off the head” policy as used in Sri Lanka as well as partnering with the governments of Uganda, South Sudan, the Central Africa Republic, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the combined fight against the Lord’s Resistance Army. The United States missions to these African nations should also institute an interagency working group to craft the Operational Art bridging the Strategic goals of the U.S. and the tactical activities on the ground in the region.

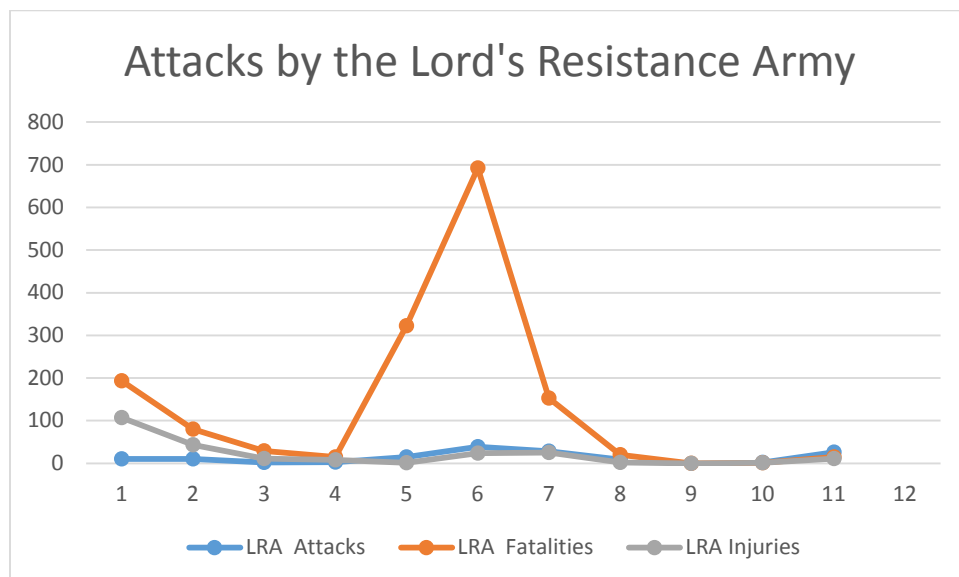


Figure 4: Terrorism activity of the Lord's Resistance Army ¹¹

¹¹ Data adapted from the Global Terrorist Database – University of Maryland 2015. A comparison with data from the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC) validated these statistics.

CHAPTER 6

Boko Haram

The Islamic extremist group Boko Haram, based in northern Nigeria, was founded in 2002.¹ The group refers to itself as Wilayat Gharb, or the Islamic State West Africa Province, ISWAP. Boko Haram became an affiliate of Al-Qa'ida after swearing allegiance to the group in 2011.² In August of that year, it carried out its first attack against a Western target using a vehicle bomb attack against the United Nations Headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria. The group gained additional recognition when it kidnapped 276 female students from their school in April 2014. In 2014, Boko Haram killed 6,600 people (51% of all fatalities by terrorist groups) and in 2015 the group is reported to have killed 6,644 by November the 18th.³ This is a significant number over their new partner (ISIL) who is reported to have killed 6,073 during the same period. Boko Haram is a group which uses violence for violence's sake and carries out a campaign of kidnapping as a means to generate terrorist funding and to instill fear in the local population.⁴

Until recently, the group was led by Abuaker Shekau, who may have been killed but has not been confirmed in open source reports.⁵ His last public statement was a taped radio message, in March 2015, in which he pledged the group's allegiance to ISIL. In

¹ The International Institute for Strategic Studies, Armed Conflict Database, Boko Haram, (February 2016), <https://acd.iiss.org/en/nonstatearmedgroups/boko-haram-d8d1> (accessed Feb 11, 2016).

² Ibid.

³ Russia Today News. "*Boko Haram kills more people than ISIS as total hits historic high*". (18 November 2015) www.rt.com/news/322529-global-terrorism-index-report/ (accessed 8 January 2016).

⁴ Ibid

⁵ British Broadcasting Corporation, "*Nigeria's Boko Haram militants 'have new leader'*" (Aug 12, 2015) www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33889378 (accessed 8 January 2016).

August 2015, a new face appeared in the video taped messages and the President of Chad publically announced his name to be Mahamat Daoud. The Chadian president seems to be reporting the new leader is ready to negotiate with authorities.⁶

This might indicate that the time is ripe for negotiations to begin between the government of Nigeria and the violent extremist group.⁷

In Nigeria the United States partnered with many local authorities and neighboring countries in the fight against Boko Haram. Cooperation in military and law enforcement training and exchange of intelligence has enabled these partner nations to gain some control over the VEO. By partnering with the Nigerians, the U.S. has been able to build their competency to enable them to take a lead in the fight against to Boko Haram. Despite increases in violence by the organization in late 2015, the group retreated to a small, remote area along the Nigerian borders with the Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. In Audrey Cronin's book, she argues that groups often get more violent just before they end a terror campaign.⁸ This may or may not be a signal the group is ready to quit; however, it is probably a discussion worth having at the United States' Mission to Nigeria. The reason the conflict may end in the near future is that Abuaker Shekau was the center of gravity in the fight against the organization. Without him, the group may initially dissolve if the right tactics are used to bring the group to the negotiation table. However, if there is a successful transition of power within the group, this will be more difficult to achieve.

⁶ British Broadcasting Corporation, "Nigeria's Boko Haram militants 'have new leader'" (Aug 12, 2015) www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33889378 (accessed 8 January 2016).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Audrey Kurth Cronin, "How Terrorism Ends" This may need revisiting.

Similar Case Study

Similar case studies include the defeat of Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers and Angola's UNITAS. The level of violence between the three organizations is comparable. The lone or hierarchical organization may be similar, but the ideology is different. It may need a much larger interagency approach following traditional counterinsurgency doctrine (COIN). And if Boko Haram has been able to regroup or survive a change in leadership this may signal the organization has the capacity to adjust, and will not negotiate.

Recommendations/Summary

The United States missions in Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Chad should institute an interagency working group like the one created in Niamey, Niger, to craft the Operational Art bridging the Strategic goals of the U.S. and the tactical activities on the ground in the region. The United States must continue its partnership with governments of these regional partners in the fight against Boko Haram.

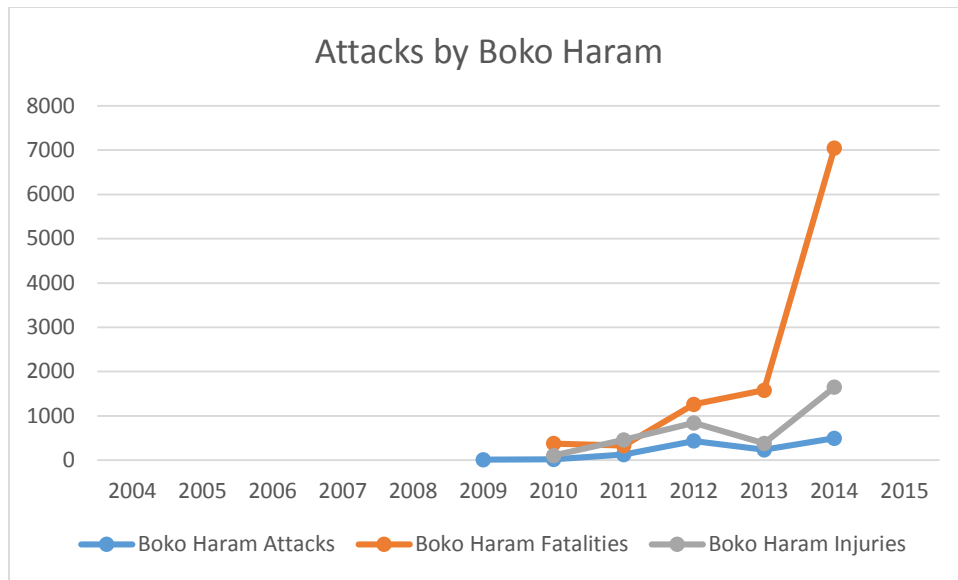


Figure 5: Terrorism activity of Boko Haram⁹

⁹ Data adapted from the Global Terrorist Database – University of Maryland 2015. A comparison with data from the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC) validated these statistics.

CHAPTER 7

Al Shabab

Harakat al-Shabab al-Mujahidin, commonly referred to as Al Shabab, originated as the militant wing of the Somali Council of Islamic Courts and traces back to 2006. In that year they carried out an insurgency against the central government of Somalia. In 2008, the U.S Department of State recognized it as an international terrorist organization. Though Al Shabab has carried out several high profile attacks in neighboring countries, like the takeover of the West Gate Shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya in September 2013, and an attack against a restaurant frequented by Westerners in Djibouti in 2014, they are not as deadly as the two groups listed in the previous chapters. They have been, however, active against softer civilian targets and are known to carry out attacks that follow their religious ideology. For example, Al Shabab was responsible for the school attack in Kenya in April 2015, where the group singled out Christian students for execution.

Though the United States does not have a Diplomatic mission in Somalia it does engage the government through the Department of State's Virtual Presence post. In the case of Somalia, the Charge D 'Affairs, Ambassador David Kauper and his staff work from Nairobi, Kenya. The U.S. Military provides support for the region from Camp Lemonier in nearby Djibouti. The Joint Task Force assigned to the Horn of Africa assists with training and building partner capacity of many regional partners.

Similar Case Study

Al Shabab is not monolithic in its goals and neither is its leadership. The Counterterrorism Center's web page states, "most Al Shabab's fighters are interested in the nationalistic battle against the Somalia Federal Government and not interested in a global jihad."¹ Contrasting this statement, the site also says most of the organization's leadership was trained and fought in Afghanistan.² Though Al Shabab is described as being poorly equipped and funded, defeating Al Shabab will require the United States and its partners to employ the same tactics used against other Al-Qa'ida affiliates.³

Recommendations/Summary

The United States must continue to use its military presence in Djibouti to build partner capacity in the region. It must continue training the security forces and militaries of the Eastern Africa Standby Force. The United States missions in Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, and Tanzania should institute an interagency working group like the one created in Niamey, Niger, to craft the Operational Art bridging the Strategic goals of the U.S. and the tactical activities on the ground in the region.

¹ The National Counterterrorism Center, Groups, Background, Al-Shabab, https://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/al_shabaab.html, (accessed Feb 11, 2016).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

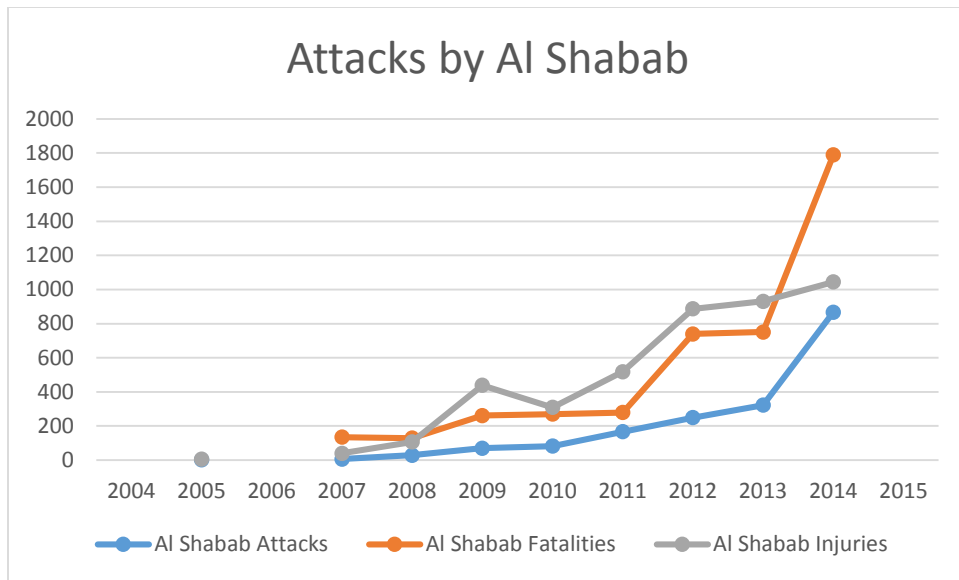


Figure 6: Terrorism activity of Al Shabab⁴

⁴ Data adapted from the Global Terrorist Database – University of Maryland 2015. A comparison with data from the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC) validated these statistics.

CHAPTER 8

Al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb

Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is a militant Islamist group founded in 1998 in Algeria. It waged a low-level insurgency against Algerian security forces with the objective of overthrowing the government and forming an Islamic state under sharia Islamic law. Since 2001, there has been an ideological division within the group between a cadre of nationalist Islamist militants and those who came to identify more with Al-Qa'ida's transnational militant Islamist ideology. Under the leadership of Abdelmalek Droukdel, AQIM has continued to build relations with Al-Qa'ida. In the past, AQIM supplemented its ongoing guerrilla insurgency against the Algerian government with periodic mass-casualty attacks. With the organization's operational area extending into Mali, and under increasing pressure in Algeria, AQIM turned to the practice of kidnapping Western nationals for ransom, a practice for which the group has become infamous. Although the group's operational tempo dropped through 2011 and early 2012, as illustrated in the data in Chapter 2, kidnapping operations continue to this day. In early January 2016 the group kidnapped Beatrice Stocky, a Swiss Missionary from her hotel in Timbuktu, Mali.¹ The activity of kidnapping made AQIM the richest Al-Qa'ida affiliate in 2012. AQIM also established a territorial foothold in Timbuktu. Although French military intervention in Mali in January 2013 forced AQIM and allied militant groups to withdraw from captured territory, AQIM relaunched a guerrilla campaign

¹ Newsweek. AQIM Releases Video of Swiss Missionary Kidnapped in Mali
<http://www.newsweek.com/aqim-releases-video-swiss-missionary-kidnapped-mali-420066>

against French and Malian forces² and carried out attacks against Western targets like the Radisson Blue Hotel in Bamako in November 2015. Figure 7, below, does not include the violent attacks by AQIM since mid-2015, but the graph does not include the most recent increase in violence by the VEO. An example of the latest violent attack by the group is the beach shooting at Grand Bassam, Cote d'Ivoire, which shows another expanse in their operational reach.

European partners have taken the lead in fighting AQIM. With troops on the ground, training and assisting local security forces, they have been able to take back some of AQIM's terrain. The U.S. also provides advisors to the effort.

Similar Case Study

Defeating AQIM will require the United States and its partners to employ the same tactics used against other Al-Qa'ida affiliates. This includes seizing financial holdings and disrupting their areas of safe haven. Like the continuing fight against Al-Qa'ida the road will be long.

Recommendations/Summary

The United States must continue to support the efforts of the French and other partners in building the capacity to influence the region and contain AQIM. The United States missions in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Cote D'Ivoire should institute an interagency working group like the one created in Niamey, Niger, to craft the Operational Art bridging the Strategic goals of the U.S. and the tactical activities on the ground in the region.

² Jane's IHS, AQIM. <https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/1320774>.

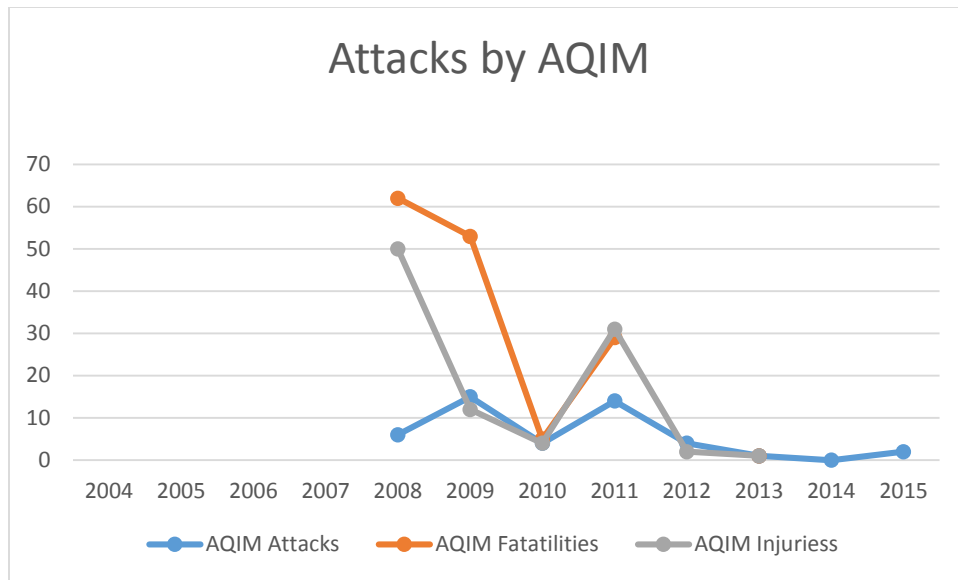


Figure 7: Terrorism activity of Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb³

³ Data adapted from the Global Terrorist Database – University of Maryland 2015. A comparison with data from the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC) validated these statistics.

CHAPTER 9

Conclusion

The thesis and the hypothesis set out to compare the strategic messaging of the United States and the activities carried out by various agencies to determine if the two are leading to progress in countering Violent Extremist Organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa. The findings differ from the hypothesis due to the vast differences within the African continent. These differences extend from the region's geography, ethnical diversity, and the socioeconomic environment where these groups operate. The key take away is there is not a universal approach to combating these VEOs in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, by comparing these groups, strategies that have been successful in the past against similar organizations, may be found effective in fighting VEOs in Africa.

The research also shows the strategic messaging is having the wanted effects. The U.S. Congress, America's partners, and the collective adversaries know the President's desired end state. This messaging is strengthened by the collective efforts of various U.S. agencies carrying out their respected duties. As this applies to Sub-Saharan Africa, U.S. partners are reassured of America's commitment to the region.

The research suggests the United States is living up to its strategic messaging. The underlying and subtle message of these documents is that the U.S. will not bear the burden of creating security alone, but rather it will take the "soft footed" approach of allowing Sub-Saharan Africa to create its own security but with our help. This help is coming in the form of training, advising, and sharing intelligence information as highlighted in the combined efforts against the LRA and Boko Haram. There is, however, an apparent gap between the strategic level effort, and the Operational level.

The research highlights significant progress in the way the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa work together in their fight against VEOs. Through the U.S. military's assistance to regional states these partners are building their internal security and seeing the long term effects the President called for in the 2012 Sub-Saharan Africa Strategy. Evidence of the collaboration was reported by the New York Times and the Washington Post articles in October 2013.¹ The articles suggest US Military advisors, with a composite team of South Sudanese, Central African Republic, and Ugandan army forces, executed a nighttime raid to try to apprehend leaders of the Lord's Resistance Army. Although unsuccessful in capturing the leaders, such operations illustrate improvements are being made and should be viewed as a success in terms of the improved regional cooperation towards combating terrorism.

An unexpected finding, is that all four groups have become more violent since the release of the 2012 Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa as illustrated in the graphs paired with each group above. The degree to which each group's violence has increased varies since the release of the document. For example, Al Shabab and AQIM have adjusted tactics and increased their campaigns in 2014 and 2015. It is not clear what caused the increase of violence. Perhaps these organizations are inspired by the successes of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, or to counter U.S. efforts. In other words, is the United States and its partners affecting the system in such a way that causes the increase? Or, is

¹ Rajiv Chandrasekaran, Kony 2013: "U.S. quietly intensifies effort to help African troops capture infamous warlord", The Washington Post, (October 28, 2013), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/kony-2013-us-quietly-intensifies-effort-to-help-african-troops-capture-infamous-warlord/2013/10/28/74db9720-3cb3-11e3-b6a9-da62c264f40e_story.html (accessed November 18th 2015).

it simply these organizations are becoming more violent because they are about to die, as Audrey Cronin suggests.

The United States is spending a great deal of time and resources in assisting Africa with building the infrastructure to fight violent extremist organizations. But is there a better way to bring together the counterterrorism elements within the United States interagency in the affected nations? The paper proposes there is, it is copying Embassy Niger's interagency working group for combating terrorism.

As mentioned in chapter 4 above, every country is unique. Each has its own size and relative importance to the United States' Strategic interests. So the approach has to be scalable, and may be relevant to the size of the Mission.²

The recommendation is for U.S. Missions within Sub-Saharan Africa to create a sub-committee of its Emergency Action Committee for the purpose of coordinating intercountry counter VEO efforts. The Emergency Action committee would be responsible for planning and preparing the post of a crisis, including the possible evacuation of mission staff and or dependents and American citizens if necessary. A Mission's Emergency Action Committee would vary in its makeup of officers. However, most consist of the Chief of Mission and Deputy Chief of Mission, the Regional Security Officer, the Management Councilor, the Information Management Officer, the Medical Officer, the Community Liaison Officer, the head of the Consular section, the Defense Attaché, and the heads of some of the other government agencies at post. This body is different from Post's normal Country Team that may include other subordinate offices in the mission.

² Mission in this context means the United States' Mission being the American embassy or consulate.

Like other standing working groups at U.S. missions, the newly created Counterterrorism Working Groups would be chaired by the Deputy Chief of Mission and be inclusive of representatives of each agency working to disrupt VEOs in country. The working group would establish its own agendas and the frequency in which it meets. The flexibility is inherent to the concept based on the needs.

The focus of the working group is to coordinate the United States' effort for combating terrorism within their respected country, ensuring the collective actions meet the intent of the NSS, the U.S. Strategy for sub-Saharan Africa, the National Strategy for Counterterrorism, and the Ambassador's intra-country strategy. A hopeful consequence is that the interagency effort will lead to better forms of cooperation within the mission.

As this approach moves forward, the interagency working group can establish internal goals to measure the program's success. These goals can be turned into matrices that will help evaluate success and help align resources.

Since many of the Missions in Sub-Saharan Africa fall into the high or critical threat category for indigenous and transnational terrorism, the recommendation applies to these specifically. Posts with lower threat ratings may use this approach as well.

The focus of the group is to coordinate the United States' effort for combating terrorism. To review the intent of guidance documents like the National Security Strategy, the U.S. Strategy for sub-Saharan Africa, and the National Strategy for Counterterrorism. And to review the Ambassador's intercountry strategy and ensure the desired ends are being met. A hopeful consequence is the interagency effort will lead to partnering within the mission and a comprehensive approach will follow.

As this approach moves forward, the interagency working group could establish internal goals to measure the program's success. These goals can be in the form a matrices, which are quite common in the State Department for measuring success. These matrices can then be evaluated to see if additional resources are needed or redirected.

The Working Group can then determine if they are meeting the goals laid out in United States' Strategic Documents.

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